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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: NIGER DELTA MINISTRY CREATED, OTHER  
MINISTRIES REVAMPED

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: On September 9, the the GON announced a restructuring of federal ministries, establishing Aviation, Transport, Works, Housing and Urban Development, Water Resources, Agriculture and Rural Development, and Police Affairs as substantive ministries, and creating a Ministry of the Niger Delta, which will focus on development and youth empowerment. While ministers have not yet been named to the new positions and other long-rumored changes in cabinet personnel are still expected to occur, this new development creates an opening for some needed reform, especially in how the GON approaches the Niger Delta crisis. It also points to the continued consolidation of Yar'Adua's power and, at least according to some press speculation, may presage further medical treatment for the President in the near future. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) The September 10 announcement of a revamping of federal ministries elevated Aviation, Transport, Works, Housing and Urban Development, Water Resources, Agriculture and Rural Development, and Police Affairs to substantive ministries and created a Ministry of the Niger Delta. The Ministry of Energy has been split into the Ministry of Power and the Ministry of Petroleum Resources. It also reduced the number of ministers in the Ministries of Education, Mines and Steel Development, and Science and Technology by one each. There will now be 28 ministries total, with 42 ministers and ministers of state eventually appointed to head them. Presidential spokesman Olusegun Adeniyi said the changes were designed to "fast-track and effectively coordinate the implementation of (President Yar'Adua's) Seven-Point Agenda." A committee to determine the mandates of the new ministries is expected to be inaugurated today, and produce its recommendations within one week.

13. (SBU) The Ministry of the Niger Delta's portfolio will consist of development and youth empowerment, with a separate minister for each. According to new Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Mahmud Yayale Ahmed, overlap with the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) will be avoided by folding the NDDC into the new ministry as a parastatal. The new Ministry has been hailed in press reports as a positive sign of Yar'Adua's intent to make headway in solving the protracted Niger Delta crisis, especially in light of GON missteps and failings in recent months.

14. (SBU) COMMENT: Yar'Adua's reshaping of the Government

continues to be slow and incremental rather than revolutionary. The next Federal Executive Council meeting will be postponed one week until September 24, purportedly to give the GON time to implement the changes, but prompting some papers to speculate that we may see another medically-related Presidential absence in the interim. The current changes in personnel and structure are also widely viewed in part as efforts to further reduce former President Obasanjo's influence, who in the course of his administration merged 50 ministries into 19. Post will monitor further developments carefully, especially in regard to the Ministry of the Niger Delta. End comment.  
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